Dr. Steponaitis:

I write to offer my enthusiastic support for your ambitious plan to create *Ancient North Carolinians: A Virtual Museum of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology*.

As the founding editor of *Texas Beyond History: The Virtual Museum of Texas’ Cultural Heritage* ([www.texasbeyondhistory.net](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net)), I can offer insight into exactly what you are trying to create. Namely, a freely available public education venue sharing the hard-won knowledge about the ancient and not-so ancient with the citizens of North Carolina and beyond. To my knowledge, our website, TBH, is the only directly parallel effort anywhere in North America. Our success was nationally recognized when we received the 2008 *Excellence in Public Education* award from the Society for American Archaeology, our leading professional organization. Frankly, we have been a bit perplexed that other states have not attempted to create comparable websites.

Naturally, I applaud your effort and believe that “if you build it they will come.” In other words, I am very confident that when you are able to create the framework called for in your proposal, *Ancient North Carolinians* will prove highly successful and accomplish your goals. Drawing on our experience, here is why I think this.

When we began TBH in 2001 we scarcely knew what we were getting into. We hoped it would work, we had some good materials to work with, we had an ideal context — established research lab within a major university (Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at the University of Texas, Austin) — and we wanted to tell the story of Texas’ cultural heritage to a diverse audience, ranging from the general public to schoolchildren to our fellow archaeologists, profession and avocational. In hindsight, we were right about those things, but quite naïve about what it would take to accomplish this. At first every step was challenging — creating the content, making it look good and function well, raising the necessary funds, figuring out who our “other” audiences were and so on. But we persisted to build it and they did come. And keep coming.

Since the get-go we have tracked web traffic through web-monitoring programs provided by UT-Austin. We use valid statistics, not mere “hits,” which are inflated numbers, but “page views” and various other metrics that tell us how many people use the website, which pages they visit, how long they stay and so on. We’ve seen the website grow from a few thousand page views daily to a daily average of over 25,000, which translate to about 8,000 users per day. And by monitoring the
daily, weekly, and monthly traffic we can see that the use peaks predictably occur during the
workweek in September and October of each year. Not coincidentally, this is when Texas History
classes in the 4th and 7th grades cover prehistory and early history, the periods covered by our
website. We estimate that about 40% of our traffic comes from the K-12 audience.

But we now also realize that college students constitute another important audience that we did not
really anticipate. There is no suitable textbook on Texas archaeology, at least not in conventional
printed form. TBH is the long-missing textbook and its online, no-cost, and replete with thousands
of color images. Recognizing the diverse nature of the audience we have gone beyond our first
essentially two-level approach – K-12 and educated lay public, and have also added content aimed
at serious students of archaeology. The multilayered nature of the web allows you to easily add
nested/linked layers and content areas appealing to quite different audiences. And it looks like that
is exactly what you plan to do as well.

I see you too plan on adding resources for both schoolchildren and their teachers and working with
educators to make sure your materials will accomplish state standards. Teachers will love it,
bookmark it, download lesson plans, and assign their students to explore the interactive activities.
The general public will be able to learn what archaeologists have actually learned and from that
better understand that important cultural resources are worth protecting and studying correctly.
Professors will assign your special exhibits and ancient peoples sections. And you’ll be surprised at
how often images and information from your website shows up on educational presentations made
by your fellow professional archaeologists.

I could lather on statistics and accolades, but I am certain that if you follow your plan and build it
well, they will come and keep coming. Ancient North Carolinians, like Texas Beyond History will
win awards and capture the imagination of the wider world. You’ll be able to help support its
continued growth through educational grants and by commissioned exhibits by Cultural Resource
Management projects which increasingly have the contractual obligation to create public outreach
components.

I look forward to seeing your project unfold. And I am willing to continue our conversation in
hopes of shortening your learning curve. Let me know how I can help.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. Black
Co-Editor, Texas Beyond History
Assistant Professor
Department of Anthropology

PS: I’ll throw in one more side benefit – training university students through internships and part-
time employment. We’ve worked with dozens of both undergraduate and graduate students over
the years and had really excellent “win-win” experiences. We get enthusiastic labor and creativity;
they get valuable training in research, writing, and web construction. More than a few have gone on
to successful professional careers.
November 17, 2014

Dr. Vincas Steponaitis, Director
Research Laboratories of Archeology
108 Alumni Building, CB#31
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Dear Vin,

Please accept this letter as an enthusiastic endorsement of the Research Laboratories of Archaeology's Ancient North Carolinians: A Virtual Museum of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology initiative. I support this worthwhile proposal that seeks to develop and disseminate exceptional materials for K-12 teachers and students in North Carolina.

LEARN NC has partnered with the Research Laboratories of Archeology for years to develop and disseminate high-quality curriculum materials for teachers and students. LEARN NC, a program of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Education, provides lesson plans, professional development, and innovative web resources to support teachers, build community, and improve K-12 education in North Carolina. LEARN NC provides teachers and administrators a high-quality, cost-effective professional development program that increases teacher knowledge.

As an educator, I understand the importance of having researched-based materials such as this to use in the classroom. The focus of these resources will target an area in the field that has limited materials to engage students in learning about the North Carolina. I have used Intrigue of the Past with my undergraduate education students for years. I have found this resource helpful in preparing teachers to teach. I am very excited about having these and other curriculum resources available for students, teachers and teacher educators available online in such an innovative way. This will allow students and teachers across North Carolina the opportunity to engage in learning in such an interactive way. I fully support the proposal and I hope you give it every consideration during the review process.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Mason Bolick, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Director of Outreach for Professional Development and Research
Dr. Vincas P. Steponaitis  
Professor Anthropology  
Chair, Curriculum in Anthropology  
Director, Research Laboratories of Archaeology  
University of North Carolina, CB# 3120  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3120  

Dear Dr. Steponaitis:  

The purpose of this letter is to express strong support for your “Ancient north Carolinians” project, which would allow fund a web site to provide information about the ancient Indian cultures and traditional crafts practiced by contemporary artists in this state.  

A longstanding problem for Indian people in North Carolina has been the lack of reliable and easily obtainable data on the work of archaeologists, as well as other information about our history that has been learned as a result of this valuable work. Your proposed web site will be a great help in meeting this need, and it will also raise awareness of this important part of the state's heritage among all of North Carolina's citizens.  

Since additional knowledge promotes greater understanding, I envision the widespread application of your study by both the schools as well as the general public. I applaud your interest in this project, and in my opinion, there is no better way to make the research done at the University of North Carolina, and other campuses, accessible to the public.  

Yours truly,  

Gregory A. Richardson  
Executive Director
Dear Vin,

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians strongly supports “Ancient Carolinians: A Virtual Museum of North Carolina Cultural Heritage.” A web resource would be very useful for our students here in Cherokee as fieldtrips to other museums are logistically difficult. Not only will it provide information useful in our schools, but it will also contribute to the growing interest in traditional crafts, which are very important to our tribe’s economy. In recent years, Cherokee potters have studied and been inspired by the ancient styles represented in the archaeological collections at UNC. These styles have now been revived and are growing in popularity in the marketplace. This has been a real “success story” illustrating the benefits that can come from making archaeological information available outside the university’s walls, especially to descendant communities like ours. I sincerely hope your project gets funded.

Sincerely,

Russell Townsend
EBCI THPO
November 14, 2014

Dr. Vincas Steponaitis, Director
Research Laboratories of Archaeology
108 Alumni Building, CB# 3120
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3120

Dear Vin,

The Catawba Indian Nation unequivocally supports development of the “Ancient North Carolinians” project. As indicated by your proposal, the “Ancient North Carolinians” web resource will present information that is essential to Catawba cultural heritage, and the site will be especially useful help educate Catawba students about their ancestors in the remote past. The recent involvement of the Research Laboratories of Archaeology in the archaeology of Catawba communities has been particularly important to our understanding of the historical experience of the Catawba people, and we look forward to the incorporation of information from this research into an easily accessible form on the website. We welcome the development of these resources, and we look forward to having the “Ancient North Carolinians” available to our students and other tribal members.

Sincerely,

Wenonah G. Haire, DMD
Executive Director
Nov. 12, 2014

Dr. Vincas P. Steponaitis  
Research Laboratories of Archaeology  
University of North Carolina  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3120

Dear Dr. Steponaitis:

Visit NC, a unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) is writing in support of the Research Laboratories of Archaeology at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill's effort to create; Ancient North Carolinians: A Virtual Museum of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology.

The resources provided on this website would enable local tourism contacts throughout North Carolina to develop programs that highlight the American Indian experiences in their communities. With more than 250,000 American Indians in North Carolina - the most east of the Mississippi River - there is vast potential to supplement the state's tourism product.

This heritage tourism and folklife initiative would help nurture economic prosperity through small business and entrepreneurial development. The result could be greater community wealth and increased visitation by travelers.

The Visit NC believes this tool would increase awareness and appreciation-and educate the public about the encounters of the American Indian population in North Carolina. It is an integral part of our state's heritage and a story that must be told.

We wish you great success in this endeavor and look forward to working with you on this project.

Sincerely,

Andre' R. Nabors  
Partner/Trade Relations Manager

Wit Tuttell  
VP of Tourism and Marketing

Richard Lindenmuth  
CEO
November 14, 2014

Dr. Vincas P. Steponaitis
Director, Research Laboratories of Archaeology
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3120

Dear Dr. Steponaitis,

I write to offer my enthusiastic support for your plan to develop Ancient North Carolinians: A Virtual Museum of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology. Through this project, you will be making 12,000 years of human history accessible to the citizens of North Carolina and to the world. Academic research is sometimes criticized for operating in the proverbial Ivory Tower and only being relevant to those within a specialized professional community. The project you are proposing is designed to very effectively tear down those walls and engage the general public in examining the evidence of our deep human past.

As a teacher of teachers, I cannot state strongly enough how important these virtual resources will be to advancing education in North Carolina. We are rapidly moving away from the use of textbooks and relying instead on digital texts. The Virtual Museum will provide essential content for numerous subject areas including social studies, science, history, and geography. Teachers will have access to real data and authentic documents that develop critical thought and stimulate inquiry.

I wish you great success with this proposal and would be honored to serve in an advisory capacity when you begin project implementation.

Sincerely,

Elaine Franklin, PhD
Director
3116 Academy Road
Durham, NC 27707

November 16, 2014

Dr. Vin Steponaitis
Director, Research Laboratories of Archaeology
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599-3120

Dear Vin:

I am writing to offer my enthusiastic support for your proposal to create an “Ancient North Carolinians” interactive web resource for students, teachers, and the general public.

As a middle-school teacher, I am keenly aware of the value of such a resource for North Carolina students and teachers. My colleagues and I are increasingly relying on digital resources to supplement and even replace traditional textbooks in our classrooms. Digital resources can be updated more readily than printed materials and appeal to students who have grown up in a school setting where computers and tablets are commonplace learning tools.

For my own courses, I have completely eliminated textbooks in favor of creating my own content and using available digital resources. I look forward to making some of the archaeology lessons and activities that I have developed accessible to other teachers through your “Ancient North Carolinians” web site. I am also excited to point you in the direction of existing digital resources that would undoubtedly be used more often by students and teachers if they can be made accessible through a single web portal.

Moreover, I am confident that a resource like “Ancient North Carolinians” would be used by students and teachers beyond our state. I have recommended a similar website, “Texas Beyond History,” to colleagues all over the southeastern United States because it is the only site of its kind that I have found. Unfortunately, many of the activities on that site are Texas-specific and thus not useful to me and my nearby colleagues. Your “Ancient North Carolinians” site with activities geared toward our own state’s history would also be more relevant to teachers in neighboring states such as South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee.

I am optimistic that your proposal for the Harvey Award will be successful, and I am excited by the prospect of helping you create this valuable new resource.

Sincerely,

Theresa McReynolds Shebalin, Ph.D.
Science Teacher, Durham Academy
November 6, 2014

Dr. Vin Steponaitis
Director, Research Laboratories of Archaeology
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599-3129

Dear Vin –

I understand that you are submitting a proposal for a “A Virtual Museum of North Carolina Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.” I am more than pleased to endorse your application to the C. Felix Harvey grant program. Your project should greatly benefit the citizens of North Carolina, who we both serve in our respective professional capacities.

Web-based digital images and Web site texts effectively communicate to the public exciting, current news about archaeological sites, artifacts, and interpretation of past events. The Virtual Museum you propose undoubtedly will attract and hold a wide audience of K-12 students, while simultaneously advancing the heritage tourism goals espoused by our state and university systems.

We look forward to cooperating with the Research Labs on this important undertaking. It is truly an exciting prospect for North Carolina archaeology and history.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Claggett
State Archaeologist
Dear Vin,

I am writing for the North Carolina Archaeological Council (NCAC) to confirm our support for an initiative to create a web-based resource for teaching the early history and prehistory of North Carolina from an archaeological perspective. The proposed online resource, “Ancient North Carolinians: A Virtual Museum of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology,” will provide an exciting new online source of information about North Carolina’s Indian history and our rich archaeological heritage. The NCAC whole-heartedly endorses your bid to seek support from Harvey Enterprises & Affiliates and the Harvey family, and wishes you every success in securing the C. Felix Harvey Award.

The UNC-CH Research Laboratories of Archaeology (RLA) has a long and successful track record of providing the highest quality online resources for scholars and public school teachers. “Intrigue of the Past: North Carolina’s First People” (www.rla.unc.edu/lessons/) has been, and continues to be, a very valuable teaching tool for educators around the state who are bringing North Carolina history to life with archaeology. I have personally referred this web site to teachers in the public school system, private schools, and many home schooling families, and the response has always been the same, “Wow, what a wonderful resource!” The promise that the current project holds to expand web content to better support North Carolina teachers is truly exciting.

The proposed collaboration with North Carolina Indian representatives from the NC Commission of Indian Affairs, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and the Catawba Indian Nation is highly commendable. Raising awareness of the continuity of North Carolina’s Indian communities from deep in the ancient past to the present time enriches the lives of all North Carolinians, enlivening a sense of the importance of Indian heritage in our common history, and in our present communities.

The role that the proposed web promises to play in promoting cultural tourism is unquestionably one of the most important aspects of this project. The North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources recently reported that “An economic impact study commissioned by the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership … showed that heritage tourism contributes $2.39 billion to the economy of Western North Carolina, supporting more than 30,000 jobs and generating $176.5 million in state and local tax revenue” (http://www.ncarts.org/AboutUs/PressReleases/). The development of archaeological and cultural heritage tourism could have similar economic impacts, especially in eastern North Carolina, and the proposed project promises to greatly advance that effort. Enriching a general understanding of the inherent value of our state’s surviving archaeological sites also provides critically important support for the protection of cultural resources that are more threatened today than at any time in our state’s history.

The NCAC highly commends the web-based initiative proposed by the RLA, eagerly endorses its goals, and strongly recommends its support by the C. Felix Harvey Award.

Very Respectfully Yours,
Joseph M. Herbert, Chair
10 November 2014

Dr. Vincas P. Steponaitis  
Director, Research Laboratories of Archaeology  
University of North Carolina  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3120

Dear Dr. Steponaitis,

As the North Carolina Archaeological Society just marked its 80th year as a non-profit, statewide organization dedicated to the preservation and promotion of our state’s archaeological heritage, we are pleased to partner with the Research Laboratories of Archaeology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Our Society is composed of avocational and professional members who share an enthusiasm for North Carolina archaeology (prehistory and history). One of its primary purposes is to spread archaeological knowledge through publications, annual meetings, organized research projects, and educational programs. Therefore it is perfectly appropriate that the NCAS pledges its full support for your grant proposal to create a World Wide Web page for our state titled “Ancient North Carolinians.” From the description provided in your proposal, it appears that the content and access of such information by the general public will serve the citizens and visitors, educators and students (specifically K-12 groups), and scholars and researchers. In addition economic developers of North Carolina can learn more about our valuable archaeological resources and how best to preserve them where possible. Moreover, it is well-suited to the NCAS’s mission.

We are very excited and appreciative to be included as a future partner in this endeavor, and believe it will go far to create a greater awareness of preservation and scientific exploration of archaeological sites. Moreover, it will promote responsible attitudes towards archaeological resources to deter destructive and unlawful activities that adversely impact those resources.

On behalf of the NCAS, Board of Directors and Membership, we applaud your creative efforts to launch such an interactive program and are confident that your grant will be successful. The proposed web-based format will be a valuable contribution to our state’s cultural heritage in so many ways. We look forward to using it and contributing to it!

Respectfully,

Dr. Linda Carnes-McNaughton  
NCAS Board Secretary, (910 908-4280)